R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 018 779 AL 000 993

SPANISH AND THE HIGH SCHOOL LEARNER OF PORTUGUESE.

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PUB DATE DEC 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.36 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *PORTUGUESE, *SPANISH, *CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS, *INTERFERENCE (LANGUAGE LEARNING), LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS,

SINCE MANY STUDENTS OF PORTUGUESE HAVE SOME PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF SPANISH, THE TEACHER OF PORTUGUESE SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE EFFECTS CAUSED BY THE CLOSE STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE LANGUAGES. THE AUTHOR BELIEVES THAT "FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, AN AMERICAN ENGLISH SPEAKER WHO HAS A REASONABLE (UNDEFINED) COMMAND OF SPANISH WILL REACT TO PORTUGUESE IN ESSENTIALLY THE SAME WAY THAT A NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKER WILL." THIS HYPOTHESIS IS BASED ON THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS OF THREE GROUPS OF PORTUGUESE LEARNERS--NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH WITH SOME MASTERY OF SPANISH, LATIN AMERICAN NATIVE SPEAKERS OF SPANISH, AND URUGUAYANS LIVING ON THE BORDER NEAR BRAZIL WHO LEARN PORTUGUESE ALONG WITH SPANISH FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD. IN ALL THREE GROUPS THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH ON THE LEARNING OF PORTUGUESE WAS "STRIKINGLY SIMILAR" AND DIFFERENCES AMONG THE GROUPS APPEARED MOSTLY OF DEGREE RATHER THAN TYPE. AT THE PRESENT AND IN THE NEAR FUTURE, HOWEVER, AMERICAN STUDENTS WITH COMPETENCE IN SPANISH WILL HAVE TO USE AVAILABLE TEXTS WRITTEN FOR THE MONOLINGUAL ENGLISH SPEAKER. THE INDIVIDUAL TEACHER OF PORTUGUESE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR--(1) BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH THE STRUCTURE OF SPANISH THROUGH LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTIONS OF ITS PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR, AND (2) DEFINING THE NATURE OF THE LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN CONTRASTING THE TWO LANGUAGES, AT LEAST IN TERMS OF WHETHER THE SOUND SYSTEM, THE GRAMMAR, OR THE VOCABULARY ARE INVOLVED. SEVERAL SHORT EXAMPLES ARE GIVEN OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF A BACKGROUND IN SPANISH ON THE LEARNER'S PERFORMANCE IN BEGINNING AND INTERMEDIATE PORTUGUESE. (JD)

ED018779

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SPANISH AND THE HIGH SCHOOL LEARNER OF PORTUGUESE

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It is no news to teachers of Portuguese that many students come to this language after having acquired some control of Spanish. This is the case in most universities and will probably apply to the high schools as Portuguese gains a place in their curricula. The special relationship holding between these two major languages has consequences for the Portuguese class sufficient to justifiy attention in the professional literature, including text materials.

Amid a general scarcity of audio-lingual texts for the American learner of Portuguese, it is not surprising that little attention has been given to learning problems occasioned by a language other than English. If Portuguese students were to be grouped according to whether or not they have a background in Spanish, special teaching materials would be in order; for example, D. M. Feldman's An Experimental Programmed Audio-Lingual Self-Instruction Course in Brazilian Portuguese for Speakers of Spanish (Fullerton, California, 1966).

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I think that for some time to come, we must assume that students with moderate to strong competence in Spanish will study Portuguese with texts geared to the purely English-speaking learner. Teachers will find it desirable to devote some attention to problems peculiar to such learners. In an effort to satisfy such a need, Professor Feldman and I are preparing a supplement to Modern Portuguese (Austin, Texas, 1966). In all likelihood our contribution will focus more on negative transfer, or interference, than on the exploitation of similarities between the two languages.

I should like to make three points. First, the teacher should be quite clear as to what is meant by "Spanish" and "Portuguese" in statements about the two, whether separately or in contact. Second, I should like to discuss the notion "a knowledge of Spanish" on the part of the learner of Portuguese. Third, I shall point out some ways in which a knowledge of Spanish is seen to affect American learners' performance in Portuguese.

This is not the place to discuss the language/speech dichotomy or to attempt a coherent distinction between "language" and "dialect". One should at least make a distinction between the notions "Spanish (Portuguese) language" in the sense of some type of codified norm, and "Spanish (Portuguese)" as written or spoken by given people at given times and places and under given circumstances.

In other words, if we wish to argue that an utterance is (not) correct "Spanish" or "Portuguese", we should make clear whether we mean (1) that the utterance is (not) rejected by some accepted authority, such as a standard grammar or dictionary, as part of the standard or literary or official language, or (2) that the utterance has a certain status in the observed speech or writing of those whose usage we think should be followed.

Criteria (1) and (2) are partially but not fully independent, and they represent but two rational bases for what are generally value judgements about languages. They can be invoked to qualify statements about phonology (e.g., which regional or national norm is to be taught), grammar (e.g., how to deal with constructions like "eu vi ela", "tu não quer", "Me parece que...", "nossos amigo"...), or lexicon (are forms like sacar and olvidar Portuguese words?).

As concerns "knowledge of Spanish", there arises an obvious question: just how much Spanish is the student assumed to know, and to what extent will the speaker of Spanish as a second language react like a native Spanish-speaker? To cut through the theoretic difficulties involved, I should like to propose the hypothesis that for practical purposes, an American English speaker who has a reasonable (undefined) command of Spanish will react to Portuguese in essentially the same way that a native Spanish-speaker will.

As far as I know, there is no experimental evidence to prove this statement. However, I would offer in support of it personal observations of three groups of lear - ners sharing a "knowledge of Spanish" but differing widely in linguistic background and in the circumstances in which they had acquired Portuguese. One group consists of North American students, native speakers of English who had but recently acquired (some mastery of) Spanish. A second group consists of native Spanish-speakers... mostly Mexicans and Bolivians...who undertook to study Portuguese in later life. These two groups have been observed for two years at the University of Texas. A third group consists of Uruguayans residing at the Brazilian border, who acquire and continually use Portuguese from early childhood much in the way southwesterners of Mexican descent acquire and use Spanish. This last group was observed in the course of field research which is described in F. Hensey, Linguistic Consequences of Culture Contact in a Border Community (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Texas, 1967).

The linguistic behavior of members of all three groups was strikingly similar as concerns difficulties with Portuguese. Interference was of the type that would be predicted by comparative analysis. Differences among the groups appear mostly of degree rather than type; even the lexical difficulties were the same (transfer of forms like quitar, hay...even the hybrid verb form conhocer).

I would argue that there are at least empirical grounds for the hypothesis. If it is in fact the case, then it follows that materials prepared for "Spanish-speaking learners of Portuguese" need not concern themselves with whether or not Spanish is the learner's first language.

It is the task of the linguist to make the structural analyses and comparisons which underly teaching materials intended to help the teacher deal with interference...and, for that matter, to help him take advantage of the student's background in Spanish or other Romance languages. The teacher should, however, have some insight into the nature of the positive and negative effects of that background, since no teacher's manual, supplement, or the like is apt to be exhaustive.

First, the teacher should have an understanding of the structure of Spanish. I think it is not risky to assume that most American teachers of Portuguese can at least speak Spanish; certainly they can read it and consequently they can read <u>about</u> it. There is an abundance of descriptive material dealing with Spanish phonology, grammar, etc.

Second, the teacher should be made aware of the need to define and classify the linguistic problems involved, at least in terms of whether the sound system, the grammar, or the vocabulary are involved.

The handout shows a few general ways in which a knowledge of Spanish can help the learner of Portuguese (positive aspects) and others where errors are likely to arise because the student applies Spanish rules to what should be a Portuguese utterance (negative aspects). Classification as "phonological", "morphological", etc., means that I think the problem is best treated as belonging to that particular domain of language. Evidently, it is often the case that several levels are involved at the same time.

Many teachers should see in this display features of their classroom experience with Spanish-speaking learners. Making use of the positive features implies, at least, that the teacher emphasize some aspects and may pass over others more quickly than if the student did not know Spanish. Probably a fully consistent exploitation of the positive features would require restructuring the text material.

Dealing with the negative aspects is less problematic, since the teacher can be provided with exercises to be applied as needed. This implies no disruption of course content.

Certainly Portuguese can and should be studied on its own terms, but it would be unrealistic to ignore the present special relationship between the two languages. Particularly at the high school level, where Portuguese is often a newcomer to the curriculum, attention to this matter is clearly desirable.

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"Examples of Positive and Negative Effects of a Background in Spanish on the Learner's Performance in Portuguese: Beginning and Intermediate"

Positive	Negative
PHONOLOGY	
Recognition of many structural and physical similarities, like dental articulation of /t/,/d/; flapped /r/; contrast of two r's	Difficulties where the two phonologies differ, e.g., failure to distinguish b/v, s/z, open and close e, o
MORPHOLOGY	
Recognition of most processes of word formation, noun and verb inflection, and quite similar phonetic shape of many morphemes	Non- and mis-application of specifically Portuguese processes, like vowel metaphony in verbs; some plurals
SYNTAX	
Recognition of rules and relationships common to both languages, like gender/number concord, use of subjunctive in dependent clauses	Non- or mis-application of specifically Portuguese rules, e.g., selection of tenses of subjunctive, atonic pr. placement
LEXICON	
High lexical correlation yields a large passive vocabulary and facilitates learning of active vocabulary; conversion rules are fairly obvious and quickly discovered	For certain basic vocabulary, errors in semantic range of given forms; some errors in choice of gender; replacement of Portuguese words by Spanish ones
ORTHOGRAPHY	
Acquaintance with many spelling conventions applicable to both languages, like the alternation of c/qu, g/gu, r/rr	Most difficulties are likely to involve the sibilant consonants, especially /s/, and extensive use of diacritics